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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RPO DUBAI 000373

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SUBJECT: IRAN: IRIG EFFORTS TO SHUT DOWN THE OPPOSITION

REF: REFTEL RPO DUBAI 362

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The IRIG is pursuing several strategies simultaneously to cow the opposition and to prevent further protests. Some elements of this strategy include the ongoing show trials of prominent reformers, pressuring opposition leaders by arresting or threatening family members, canceling public events to prevent opposition gatherings, monitoring Iran's universities, and waging a relentless rhetorical campaign to discredit opposition leaders. Although the government's preferred weapons involve coercion, it is also using the Judiciary to support its contention that it will deal legally with those few elements of the regime who may have gone to excess in reacting to the post-election disturbances. It is unclear to what extent the IRIG response reflects a coordinated effort but the intensity of its response indicates its very real desire to defuse the volatile situation it created with the election fraud and subsequent brutal crackdown, by any means necessary. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Elements within the IRIG have begun using opposition leaders' family members as leverage. Expediency Council head Rafsanjani's daughter was arrested early on during the protests, along with a few other Rafanjani family members, and quickly released. Now, others face possible arrest or have been arrested. Rafsanjani's son Mehdi Hashemi (and nephew Ali) were accused during the show trial of corruption and Iranian media in late August said there were rumors that they would be arrested for financial corruption. According to Fars News, Iran's Judiciary on September 6 issued an arrest warrant for Mehdi Karroubi's son Ali based on allegations of financial wrongdoing in connection with a business deal. Separately, BBC Farsi is reporting that the IRIG arrested nineteen year old Atefeh Imam, the daughter of Mojahedin of the Revolution member Javad Imam. She was arrested September 6, and family members said her arrest was intended to pressure her father into confessing. He was arrested in June.

[1](#)3. (C) The IRIG has cancelled or changed the location of key public events in a probable bid to deny the opposition a public space to gather. Former President Khatami and others were scheduled to speak during the annual Qadr night at the Imam Khomeini shrine, and there were reports that the opposition

would use this occasion to turn out in force as a show of strength. According to Iranian media, Khomeini's family was under pressure from the IRIG to prevent Khatami from speaking in response to which Hassan Khomeini canceled the event, which has been a Ramadan staple for the last two decades. Separately, the IRIG moved the Supreme Leader's annual end of Ramadan Eid al-Fitr address from its typical location at Tehran's massive Grand Prayer venue to a smaller University of Tehran one, presumably to deny the opposition an opportunity to gather in strength. In Qom, many clerics identified with the opposition are being prevented from speaking at Ramadan events, with more pro-Ahmadinejad clerics being substituted. Finally, the IRIG for the first time withheld permission for the public commemoration of Ayatollah Taleghani's death, an event scheduled for September 19. Taleghani was a key figure in the 1979 Revolution and has since become a symbol of revolutionary purity and piety. According to BBC Farsi, Taleghani's daughter Azam, a prominent reformist and womens' rights activist, said that another celebration sponsored by the government is not connected to his family. All these cancellations and venue changes come after Mehdi Karroubi's late August call for Iranians to take advantage of Qods day, falling at the end of Ramadan, to protest against the government.

14. (C) The IRIG is also trying to assuage popular discontent by using the Judiciary to review allegations of government misconduct. Newly-installed Judiciary Chief Hojjatoleslam Sadegh Larijani in late August charged a three-person committee with investigating detainee abuse as part of a larger review of government action following the election (COMMENT: Much like the Guardian Council's post-election investigation found no evidence of electoral fraud, this committee is highly unlikely to publicize any significant wrongdoing on the part of the IRIG, but is likely to blame a few low-level officials for various abuses in a bid to placate popular discontent over government excesses (reftel)).

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15. (C) Although university classes are still scheduled to begin on time in late September, the IRIG is clearly nervous about the approaching school year. Students strongly supported Mousavi in the presidential election and participated in the opposition protests following the election, leading to the delay and cancellation of some university exams this summer. Now, there are reports of stepped-up security on campus and more Basij students to quell potential unrest. In late August Supreme Leader Khamenei emphasized the important role academics and students play in preventing a velvet revolution, calling them "senior commanders and commanders" (respectively) in the "Soft War." He also complained that the prevalence of Western-based humanities studies in Iranian universities undermined Islamic beliefs, prompting the Supreme Cultural Council to subsequently begin reviewing humanities curriculum. This renewed emphasis on Islam in the universities has prompted oppositionist fears of a second "Cultural Revolution," similar in intent if not in scope to the 1980-1983 closing of Iranian universities and subsequent purging of faculty and curricula.

16. (C) The IRIG's rhetorical war against opposition leaders continues unabated. Attacks against reformers are prominent in the show trials, but also in other officials' public comments. In an early September speech to IRGC veterans, IRGC Commander Jafari charged that former President Khatami and other prominent reformists had viewed the election as a means to rid Iran of the Velayat-e Faqih; Ahmadinejad on September 7 named those who questioned the election "dictators" and called for those who managed the post-election unrest to be "brought to justice"; and Friday prayer leaders have called repeatedly for the leaders of the unrest to be arrested. The rhetoric is intended to discredit

the opposition leaders and may be setting the stage for their eventual arrest.

¶7. (C) Finally, the IRIG is closely monitoring public areas in Iran to prevent additional protests. An IRPO contact in late August said that although a veneer of normalcy has returned, plain clothes security forces are evident in Tehran. The IRGC too has repeatedly asserted its role in protecting the Revolution from internal threats, leaving little doubt that security forces remain at the ready to suppress unauthorized public gatherings.

¶8. (C) Comment: It is unclear if the IRIG's efforts to undermine the opposition reflect a coordinated, strategic approach to neutralizing the opposition or are instead simply reactive, defensive measures. Similarly, the degree to which the Supreme Leader's office, elements in the IRGC, or others, are coordinating the IRIG response is unknown. What is clear is that the current IRIG playbook is derived from the leadership's view of the 1979 Revolution, with the conventional wisdom among Iran's current rulers being that his vacillation indicated weakness, which emboldened the opposition, and led to his downfall, as did his refusal to use violence against his own people. At every critical junction since the June 12 elections, Supreme Leader Khamenei and others have chosen to stand firm if not to increase pressure, so as not to project an image of weakness. It is unclear to what extent the IRIG response reflects a coordinated effort but the intensity of its response indicates its very real desire to defuse the volatile situation it created with the election fraud and subsequent brutal crackdown, by any means necessary. End comment.  
EYRE